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LETTER DATED 3 JUNE 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit a press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea today, 3 June 1998, in Asmara on a military attack on my country, Eritrea, by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate this letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile MENKERIOS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

PRESS RELEASE

Ethiopian troops unleash attack against Eritrea

The Ethiopian army has today, 3 June 1998, unleashed an attack on Eritrean positions in the Ambesete Geleba (southern Eritrea) area. The attack, which was carried out by Ethiopian troops who have already been occupying Eritrean territory, was launched at 5.30 a.m. The Ethiopian army has employed tanks and heavy artillery in the attack.

This attack represents a new and dangerous escalation of the crisis between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The Ethiopian army had launched four attacks inside Eritrea over the past few days; on 22, 23 and 25 May in the Setit area; and, on 31 May, in the Alga-Aliteina areas.

The Government of Eritrea had protested to the facilitators about these dangerous attacks, underlining that this can only impede the facilitation process under way and provoke a larger confrontation. In the same vein, the Government of Eritrea has consistently refrained from publicizing these aggressive attacks in the past even while the Ethiopian Government was boasting about the losses it had "inflicted" on the Eritrean army.

The Government of Eritrea condemns Ethiopia's repetitive acts of aggression. And while affirming its legitimate right of self-defence, it again reiterates its firm conviction that the current crisis can only be resolved by peaceful and legal means. In this context, the Government of Eritrea reiterates its calls for the total demilitarization of the border areas between Eritrea and Ethiopia; the failure of which can only trigger similar and even more grave confrontations with the attendant and unnecessary loss to life and property. Unfortunately, the Ethiopian Government persists in its intransigent position of launching a full-scale war unless Eritrea "withdraws unconditionally" from territories that are indisputably Eritrean.

The Government of Eritrea also calls upon the Government of Ethiopia to respect Eritrea's recognized international boundaries and withdraw its army from the areas that it has occupied. The Government of Eritrea further calls on the international community to denounce Ethiopia's acts of aggression in contravention of the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, and to take measures to avert a further aggravation of the current crisis.